

## Veterans Group

For more information, go to [nalc.org/veterans](http://nalc.org/veterans).



## NALC Veterans Group convention project

**T**his year, the National Association of Letter Carriers will be hosting its national convention in Los Angeles, CA, in August. Letter carriers from Alaska to Florida and Maine to Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands will be descending upon L.A. The NALC Veterans Group will be putting together homeless care kit bags for at-risk and homeless veterans in L.A. and the surrounding areas.

“We are veterans helping veterans,” said Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson.

When bags are completed, they will be donated to Veteran Center in the Los Angeles area. These centers help veterans who are at risk or homeless

with tools to become self-sufficient and provide a path to successful independent living. These centers also offer programs and services that enable success, reintegration, meaningful employment and independent living.

For the care kit bags, the NALC Veterans Group is seeking new items, such as bottled water, wrapped snacks and toiletries. The following items are needed to fill the care kit bags and provide essential items for these veterans:

- **Toiletries (travel size):** Soap, lotion, deodorant, hand sanitizer, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, wet wipes, lip balm, tissues, sunscreen

- **Care items:** Socks, comb, brush, Band-Aids, water bottles
- **Non-perishable food items:** jerky, crackers, protein bars, tuna pouches, trail mix, granola bars, cereal bars, fruit snacks, bottled water

Participants will be filling 1,500 care kit bags to distribute to the at-risk and homeless veterans. Veterans Group volunteers will be stuffing the care kit bags during the convention the week of Aug. 3-7.

“Thanks in advance for lending your time,” Vela Davidson said. “Any donation is appreciated.”

Anyone with questions can contact Christina Vela Davidson at [c davidson@nalc.org](mailto:c davidson@nalc.org) or 202-662-2489.

## Veteran profile: Rich Donlon

**R**ich Donlon, a Massachusetts Northeast Merged Branch 25 member, has spent his life in many careers and disciplines. He served in the Army for six years—combining active duty and reserves—from 1964 to 1970, then studied to become a high school teacher and taught for nine years before landing his “dream job” as a letter carrier, which he performed for 27 years.

In college he pursued a teaching degree and taught for a year after he graduated. While in college, he also was a member of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (better known as ROTC), which allowed him to be commissioned into the military. After his year of teaching, he joined the Army as a second lieutenant.

He was an officer at a basic training center, where he trained young recruits and later became the officer in charge of a live-fire range. He was stationed at Fort Ord in California and briefly in Fort Jackson in South Carolina.

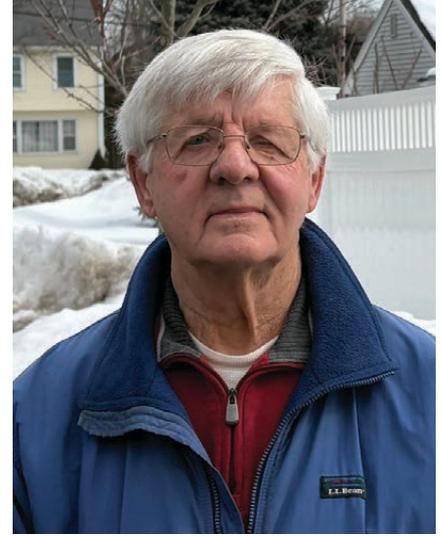
“Two of the very best years of my life were spent in the United States Army,” Donlon said of his active-duty stint. “It is really a tremendous learning experience to be in the military ... enabling you to deal in different relationships you had with your peers, with your superiors ... simply human interaction,” Donlon said. “That was a lot of what I learned in the military. Folks in the military come from all walks of life.”

After his active military service, he resumed teaching while serving in the active reserves for two years, performing military duties on week-



ends and during summer commitments. His last two years he was in inactive reserves, where he would report for duty only if he was needed, which ended up not being the case.

Although Donlon has been a member of NALC since his start at the Postal Service in 1981, his union activism began well before then. In 1974, when Donlon was teaching in the Timberlane Regional School System in New Hampshire, teachers didn’t have the right to collectively bargain in the state. Donlon, along with 103 other teachers—two-thirds of the Timberlane Regional School District



From l: The newspaper article about the teachers strike, Donlon in the Army and today

teaching staff—went on strike. They demanded a single master contract, a comprehensive collective-bargaining agreement that establishes terms and conditions of employment for a group of workers for themselves and future generations. The strike lasted for 85 days, and at the time, *The New York Times* declared it as the longest teachers strike in U.S. history. It remains one of the longest today.

On June 21, 1974, a photo was published in *The New York Times* showing Donlon and his wife picketing for their rights and the rights of all New Hampshire teachers (above). He still has a copy of the photo.

The teachers' strike led to Donlon, his wife and all 102 others being fired from the school system. Despite this, Donlon has no regrets, saying he felt they “made things better for the teachers to come.”

Feeling pressure from the strike, one year later, collective-bargaining

rights were enacted in New Hampshire with the passage of the Public Employee Labor Relations Act.

After being fired, Donlon held a variety of jobs. He worked as a substitute teacher, despite having been fired, because the school system was desperate for substitutes at the time.

“I did whatever I had to do before getting the dream job that I got,” Donlon said, “namely being a letter carrier.” He began in 1981 in Beverly, MA.

He describes it as his dream job because of the people he served. “Those routes become our second neighborhood, if you don’t deliver on your own street. For me, in particular, with 22 years on the second route that I had, you really get to know your neighbors.”

He enjoyed helping the residents, taking extra care of them and noticing changes in their lives.

“There was a lady... whose husband died. She had one of those little letter slots... so I used to wiggle that little letter slot when I put the mail in, just to make sure she’d hear it and

say hello and [I’d know] she was OK,” Donlon said.

He fondly remembers participating in the local Christmas parade. Beverly letter carriers would walk in the parade handing out candy to the community and picking up messages for Santa.

After being involved in the teachers union, he said “I couldn’t wait to join the NALC when I got the job.”

He was the branch secretary and health benefit representative, and still serves on the state association’s executive board.

Though he described it as a cliché, he states that it is important to “make things better for the people who come after you,” and says he that this is what he is doing by being involved in the union.

Since retiring in 2008, he still lives in Beverly and runs into his beloved former customers from time to time.

“One of the most gratifying things is [when former customers say], ‘Rich, we still miss you,’” he said.

## Join the NALC Veterans Group

The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide NALC members—both active and retired letter carriers—who are also military veterans the ability to connect with fellow NALC veterans and stay informed on issues of importance to letter carrier veterans. It is free to join.

Members receive a pin as a symbol of gratitude for your military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at right and mail it to the address included. A fillable version is also available at [nalc.org/veterans](http://nalc.org/veterans).



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## NALC Veterans Group

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